TOWNSHIP OF BONFIELD

Growing Bonfield Together

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2026 - 2031 | Five-Year Strategy

Prepared by

QATALYST RESEARCH GROUP

for the Township of Bonfield

Version 2.1 Final Copy | September 22, 2026

Built on the What We Heard Engagement & Evidence Report (v2.1, September 2026)

Final Draft for BR+E Working Group and Ministry review - for presentation to Council, September 8, 2026

The Township of Bonfield acknowledges that this Strategy concerns lands within the traditional territory of the Algonquin First Nation peoples, and that Indigenous peoples represent approximately 13.6 percent of the Township's population. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, work and build here, and we commit to pursuing this Strategy in genuine partnership with Indigenous governments, organizations and residents - as set out in Action F.6.

Document Control

This document is the Township of Bonfield's first formal Economic Development Strategy: a five-year plan (2026-2031) for growing the township's economy on the community's own terms. It is built directly on the evidence assembled through the Growing Bonfield Together program - the Community Economic Profile, the Business Retention + Expansion (BR+E) Survey of 24 businesses, the Community Survey (81 responses), and the working sessions, focus groups, key informant interviews and town hall documented in the What We Heard report. Every pillar, objective and action in this Strategy traces to that evidence; Appendix A shows the mapping.

Field	Detail	Status
Document	Five-Year Economic Development Strategy, 2026-2031	Final Draft v2.1 for BR+E Working Group and Ministry review
Project	Township of Bonfield Five-Year Economic Development Strategy	Active
Phase	Draft Strategy deliverable; follows the What We Heard report (D8) and weighted SWOT	In progress
Strategy period	Adoption Fall 2026 through 2031; mid-term refresh 2028-29	-
Project Authority	CAO / Clerk-Treasurer, Township of Bonfield	Confirmed
Project Manager	Christopher Cameron - Director of Consulting, Qatalyst	Confirmed
Companion documents	What We Heard v2.1 (Sep 2026); Community Economic Profile (Jun 2026, revised Sep 2026); BR+E Survey Report v2.1 (Sep 2026); Community Survey (81 responses, Jul 2026); Engagement Plan v1.0	Issued

How to use this document.

- The Strategy on a Page gives Council and residents the whole plan at a glance.
- Chapters 1 to 3 set the foundation: why this Strategy exists, where Bonfield stands, and the vision and principles that govern every choice in it.
- Chapter 4 presents the strategic framework. Chapters 5 to 10 detail the five pillars and the cross-cutting foundation, each with numbered actions, timing, the Township's role, partners and indicative budgets.
- Chapters 11 to 13 cover the first year, implementation and measurement.

- Appendix A maps every pillar to its evidence. Appendix B reproduces the priority action items and action planning templates developed by the BR+E Working Group at its retreat of June 24, 2026.

A note on commitments. This Strategy names directions and actions the Township will lead, facilitate or advocate. It does not promise specific private businesses or facilities. Where an action depends on private investment, senior-government funding or partner decisions, that dependency is stated.

A note on geography and terminology.

- **The Township of Bonfield** means the municipality as a whole: 206 square kilometres, all residents, and every action the Township can take as a corporation.
- **The rural settlement areas** means the two hamlets in which the Township's settlement, servicing and commercial activity is concentrated: the Hamlet of Bonfield and the Hamlet of Rutherglen.
- **The wider rural area** means everything outside those two hamlets: the lakes, farms, woodlots, shoreline and rural roads where most of the Township's land area, and a large share of its households and businesses, are located.

Throughout this Strategy, each objective and action states which of these it applies to. Where no qualifier appears, the action applies township-wide.

Acknowledgements

This Strategy is the product of a great many people who gave their time, their candour and their local knowledge over the better part of a year. The Township of Bonfield gratefully acknowledges:

- The Members of Council and the Mayor of the Township of Bonfield, for commissioning this work and for engaging with its findings openly.
- The Economic Development Working Group and the wider Business Retention + Expansion (BR+E) Working Group, whose members reviewed every draft, hosted the June 2026 retreat, and converted evidence into practical priorities.
- Township staff, whose administrative support, records and local knowledge underpin every chapter of this document.
- The twenty-four business owners and operators who gave confidential interviews to the BR+E survey, and the volunteer interviewers who conducted them.
- The eighty-one residents who completed the community survey, and the residents, property owners, farmers, contractors, service-club volunteers and seasonal residents who attended the working sessions, focus groups and public town hall.
- The key informants and regional partners who shared expertise, including representatives of neighbouring municipalities, NECO Community Futures, the Business Centre, The Labour Market Group, the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority, the District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board, Nipissing University and Canadore College.

- The Government of Ontario, whose Rural Ontario Development (ROD) program supported the development of this Strategy, and the Ministry representatives who provided guidance throughout.

Responsibility for the analysis, and for any errors, rests with the consulting team.

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The Strategy on a Page

Our vision for 2031

- *Bonfield in 2031 is a growing, welcoming rural township where more families put down roots each year; where the businesses we already have are visible, supported and expanding; where residents can buy fuel, food and a meal - and gather - without leaving home; and where the lakes, forests and farmland that make people choose Bonfield are protected by the same plan that grows us. One township, many communities, building an economy on our own terms.*

Pillar	What it does	Flagship moves
1. Foundations First	Fixes the enabling conditions everything else depends on: connectivity, roads, approvals, commercial space, energy, and answers on Highway 17	Broadband advocacy; approvals modernization; identify additional commercial lands
2. Support What We Have	Makes Bonfield's existing businesses visible, connected and supported - retention before attraction	Business directory; networking events; funding navigation
3. Everyday Anchors	Restores the daily essentials and gathering places the whole community named: fuel, food, market, meeting places	Fuel service restoration; weekly market; community hub feasibility
4. Homes That Work	Grows and diversifies housing - the township's realistic economic engine and its workforce precondition	Community improvement plan (CIP) incentives; additional dwelling unit (ADU) uptake; rental & seniors' partnerships
5. Sector Bets	Invests in the two evidence-backed sectors - agri-food and value-added wood - plus a visitor economy that benefits residents first	Co-op formation series; forestry scoping; signature festival
Foundation: Govern for Trust	The way everything above gets done: quick wins, honest communication, one-township inclusion, Indigenous and regional partnership, measurement	Year 1 quick wins; annual public report; partnership protocols

Year One commitments (Fall 2026 - Fall 2027)

- Publicize the standing free Saturday-vending resolution and anchor a consistent weekly farmers' market.
- Launch the Township business directory and continue to build and improve upon Bonfield's online presence.

- Hold the first quarterly business networking event, champion-led with the Township as secretariat.
- Bring Business Centre workshops and employment drop-ins to Bonfield on a standing schedule.
- Promote the additional dwelling unit subsidy and celebrate each completed unit.
- Advance fuel-service restoration: support the Rutherglen rebuild and complete diligence on the card-lock suggestion - an unstaffed, card- or fob-activated fuel outlet of the kind used by fleets, farms and contractors, requiring no attendant, storefront or fixed hours.
- Elevate and grow the community economic development committee and publish the quick-wins tracker.
- Adopt the broadband advocacy program and table the Township’s formal request for Highway 17 answers with MTO.
- Route every assistance request recorded in the BR+E to the right partner - closing the loop that was promised.

The Strategy is measured: fourteen indicators with documented baselines - from business-climate ratings to connectivity, housing completions and market operation - are tracked in Chapter 13, reported publicly every year, and refreshed at mid-term.

1. Introduction: Why This Strategy, Why Now

Bonfield has never had a formal economic development strategy. For most of its history it has not obviously needed one: the township grew up around rail, timber and farms, weathered the slow decline of its commercial services, and settled into life as a rural bedroom community of North Bay. But the last five years changed the arithmetic. Bonfield grew 7.8% between 2016 and 2021 - faster than Ontario, and among the fastest in Nipissing District. Remote work turned distance into a choice: 17% of surveyed residents already work fully from home. Half of the township's surveyed businesses plan to expand within eighteen months. Growth has arrived; the question this Strategy answers is whether Bonfield shapes it, or is shaped by it.

The community's answer, documented across four independent lines of evidence in the What We Heard report, is remarkably consistent: shape it - on Bonfield's terms. Grow the residential base modestly and diversely. Support the businesses that exist before chasing ones that do not. Restore the everyday basics - fuel, food, a place to gather. Fix the enabling conditions: connectivity, roads, approvals, space. Bet carefully on the two sectors where Bonfield has genuine advantages, agri-food and wood. Protect the lakes, the affordability and the character that make people choose this place. And rebuild trust by delivering visibly, communicating plainly, and closing every loop.

1.1 What this Strategy is - and is not

- **It is a facilitation strategy.** The Township of Bonfield is a small municipality with a roughly $5-million budget and a lean staff. It will not build or run gas stations, grocery stores or factories. Its role - confirmed by businesses, residents and partners alike - is to enable, convene, broker, advocate and, where a public asset is genuinely municipal, invest. Every action in Chapters 5-10 names which of those roles the Township is playing.
- **It is sequenced, not everything-at-once.** The community counselled realism: start small, prove value, scale what works. Year One is deliberately weighted to low-cost, high-visibility actions with documented demand behind them; larger moves are staged behind feasibility work and funding.
- **It is evidence-bound.** No action appears here without a documented basis in the profile, the BR+E, the survey or the engagement sessions. Appendix A traces every pillar to its evidence. Where the community diverged, the Strategy names the trade-off rather than hiding it (Section 3.3).
- **It is not a land-use plan, a budget, or a promise of specific businesses.** It works alongside the Official Plan review, the zoning by-law update and annual budgeting. Naming a gap (a gas station, a grocery) records community demand and directs Township effort - it does not guarantee an outcome that depends on private investment.

1.2 How this Strategy was built

The Strategy stands on the Growing Bonfield Together evidence program: the 2023 community satisfaction survey; the BR+E survey of 24 businesses (October 2025 - January 2026); the agri-food and developers' forums; the Community Economic Profile (June 2026); the community survey (81 responses, May - July 2026); and an engagement sprint of working sessions, focus groups, key informant interviews and a public town hall (June 29 - July 17, 2026). The What We Heard report (July 2026) consolidates that evidence and is this Strategy's constant reference; citations in the chapters that follow (e.g., "WWH Ch. 6") point to it. The Strategy's development was supported by the Rural Ontario Development (ROD) program.

The three background reports below were produced in the order the work was completed, and each is available as a companion document. What follows summarizes the findings from each that shaped this Strategy. Nothing in the summaries is new: each point is drawn from the report named above it.

Community Economic Profile (June 2026)

The Profile established the statistical baseline against which every other finding is read. It is a public document of the Growing Bonfield Together program, prepared for the Township and the BR+E Working Group, and it describes the Township of Bonfield as a whole.

- **Growth reversed a long decline.** The Township recorded 2,146 residents in the 2021 Census, growth of 7.8 percent over 2016 - faster than Ontario (5.8 percent) and among the strongest rates in Nipissing District. Of 1,080 private dwellings, 889 are occupied by year-round residents, confirming a substantial seasonal and recreational component.
- **The population is older than the province.** Average age is 44.2 years against 40.4 for Ontario. Residents aged 55 to 64 are 21.1 percent of the population and those 65 and over a further 20.1 percent, so more than two-fifths are at or near retirement age. The 15 to 44 cohorts are under-represented by five to seven percentage points.
- **There is no dominant anchor employer.** Columbia Forest Products' hardwood veneer plant - in neighbouring Calvin Township, close to the Hamlet of Rutherglen - is the most significant private-sector manufacturer in the immediate area. Across the Nipissing Economic Region roughly 47 percent of businesses have no employees and a further 27 percent employ one to four people.
- **Commuting defines the local economy.** Of approximately 565 employed residents with a usual place of work, 440 (78 percent) travel to North Bay and only 50 (9 percent) work within the Township.
- **Incomes sit structurally below the provincial benchmark.** Median household income is $77,000 against an Ontario median of approximately $91,000 - a gap of roughly 15 percent that reflects the Township's occupational mix rather than an evenly distributed shortfall.
- **Affordability is a real advantage, and it is compressing.** Nipissing District average sale prices ran from roughly $391,000 to $485,000 in 2024 and 2025, with waterfront listings well above that. Rental housing is 11.2 percent of the stock against approximately 31 percent provincially.
- **Regional labour demand points to specific credentials.** Roughly 3,000 unique job postings in the twelve months to April 2026 concentrate in health care, retail and service, and transportation, with the fastest growth in accounting and investment (+42.1 percent) and supply chain (+36.8 percent) roles. Bilingualism appears in 310 postings, a documented premium for Bonfield's francophone workforce.
- **Indigenous residents are approximately 13.6 percent of the population** - close to seven times the provincial share.

What it meant for this Strategy: attract and retain working-age households and remote workers (Pillar 4); diversify housing form and tenure (Pillar 4); connect residents to in-demand credentials (Pillar 2); and build the economy on many small enterprises rather than a single anchor project (Pillars 2, 3 and 5).

BR+E Community Survey Report (June 2026)

The Business Retention + Expansion survey was conducted between October 2025 and January 2026 by volunteer interviewers with regional partners, producing 24 structured and confidential business interviews. It is the Strategy's deepest evidence on what it is actually like to operate, build, hire and grow in the Township.

- **The respondent profile is itself a finding.** Twenty of 23 businesses are locally owned and operated; 15 of 17 own their premises; in 16 of 20 at least one owner lives in the community; and three-quarters employ four people or fewer. These are not footloose firms weighing locations - they are households invested in the community.
- **The base is expansion-minded.** Half of all respondents (12 of 24) plan to expand within eighteen months, and none plan to downsize or close. Expansion plans are concrete and largely self-financed, which means modest enablers can be decisive.
- **Location rates well; enabling conditions do not.** Highway access (2.95 of 4) and proximity to rail and airports (2.93) sit near the top, alongside a moderately good local climate (municipal support 2.67, other businesses 2.62, residents 2.57).
- **One bottleneck runs through the bottom of the table.** Commercial space for rent or lease is the single lowest-rated factor at 1.50 of 4, followed by housing availability, municipal fees and the permit process. The summary finding was blunt: even if they wanted somebody small to come in, there was no space.
- **Economic development itself scored lowest of all municipal services, at 1.92 of 4.** Read properly this is a mandate for this Strategy rather than a complaint, and it is the baseline against which Chapter 13 measures progress.
- **Hiring binds precisely when a business succeeds.** Every employer large enough to hire reported difficulty doing so, naming too few applicants, skills gaps, and housing and transportation as recruitment barriers. Eleven businesses asked for information on co-op, internship and apprenticeship programs - a brokering gap, not an appetite gap.
- **What businesses asked for is inexpensive.** The most-selected supports were continuation of the BR+E initiative (13), a Township-maintained business directory (13), e-marketing and social media workshops (13), access to capital (12), Township branding and communications (11) and trade show participation (11). Visibility and connection, more than money.
- **Documented supply gaps double as an attraction shortlist:** building supplies and lumber, hardware, fuel, wholesale groceries, produce and meats, garden stock, packaging inputs and local farm products - spending that leaves the community every week.

On June 24, 2026 the wider BR+E Working Group met in retreat to convert these findings into priority action items across five goal areas - business climate, future plans, business development, workforce development and community development - and completed five detailed action planning templates for the short-term items. Those priorities and templates are reproduced in Appendix B and carried into the action tables in Chapters 5 to 10 and the Year One plan in Chapter 11.

What it meant for this Strategy: retention and visibility before attraction (Pillar 2); the commercial space and approvals answer (Pillar 1); the everyday anchors businesses named alongside residents (Pillar 3); and a measurement framework anchored on the 1.92 baseline (Chapter 13).

What We Heard: Engagement & Evidence Report (July 2026)

The What We Heard report consolidates all four lines of evidence - the Profile, the BR+E survey, the community survey of 81 residents, and the working sessions, focus groups, key informant interviews and public town hall held between June 29 and July 17, 2026 - and reports the themes on which they converge. Its most striking feature is consistency: participants asked different questions by different methods described substantially the same community, the same gaps and the same realistic path forward.

- **Bonfield is growing, and the community wants that on its own terms.** Seventy-seven percent of survey respondents welcome or actively encourage growth, almost all with conditions attached: protect the lakes and water quality (61 percent), affordability (52 percent) and rural character.
- **The everyday basics are the unanimous gap.** A gas station (71 percent) and a grocery or general store (70 percent) top the most-wanted list; businesses named the same anchors independently; and every engagement session raised fuel unprompted. Participants were realistic about format - restored pumps at the Rutherglen store, a card-lock station, co-op and satellite grocery models, and a restaurant that doubles as a gathering place.
- **The economy runs through North Bay, and through Bonfield's households.** Seventy-eight percent of employed residents commute to the city and 85 percent of respondents spend mostly or almost entirely outside the Township. The realistic engine named across all sources is modest residential growth plus remote work - 17 percent of surveyed residents already work fully from home.
- **Support what exists before chasing what does not.** The town hall's starred priority, the survey's top-ranked direction (small business, ranked in the top three by 62 of 73 respondents) and the BR+E's core message all align on retention and visibility first.
- **Space, servicing and process are the bottleneck,** and the businesses it deters are by definition not in the room. Bonfield is winning on warmth and losing on transactions - and process problems are among the most fixable problems a municipality has.
- **Connectivity is an economic equity issue.** Fifty-five percent of surveyed residents say internet or cellular service limits their ability to work, run a business or study from home; better internet and infrastructure is the survey's top-rated priority at 3.97 of 5.
- **Agri-food is the under-appreciated pillar and value-added wood the credible sector bet.** Agri-food ranks third on survey priority and second on investment allocation, ahead of tourism and housing, and produced the engagement's richest idea set. Two independent expert voices converged on small, nimble wood manufacturing rather than a mega-mill.

- **Roads are the daily measure of progress -** the most-cited theme for improving daily life (29 percent) and the most common marker of five-year success (40 percent), and rated near the bottom on strength at 2.10 of 5.
- **Housing diversity is a workforce precondition.** Rental housing is 11.2 percent of stock against roughly 31 percent provincially, the district housing study identifies a one- and two-bedroom shortfall, and employers name housing and transportation as hiring barriers.
- **Trust is the currency.** The strongest closing message was a call for Council to listen genuinely and act visibly; participants urged quick, visible wins to defeat “shelf document” skepticism.

What it meant for this Strategy: the five pillars and the Govern for Trust foundation are, in order, the community’s own priorities; the Year One plan in Chapter 11 is built from the quick wins participants identified; and the five genuine divergences the report documented are named and resolved openly in Section 3.3 rather than smoothed away.

Taken together, the three reports tell one story from three directions: a growing rural township with real assets, a loyal business base, and a short and specific list of things standing in its way. This Strategy is the plan for that list.

2. Where We Stand: The Weighted SWOT

The SWOT below distils the full evidence base. It is weighted: within each section the items are listed in order of the strength and independence of the evidence behind them, so the leading items in each list carried the strongest convergence across the four lines of evidence - the profile, the BR+E, the survey and the sessions - and therefore anchor the Strategy's choices. A SWOT is a snapshot, not a verdict; several weaknesses are, read from the other direction, documented market opportunities.

2.1 Strengths

- **Growth momentum:** +7.8% population growth (2016-21), district-leading; more recent building activity than neighbouring communities.
- **Natural setting and recreation assets:** lakes, the Mattawa River, trails and the snowmobile economy - the top-rated strengths in the community survey (recreation 3.71/5) and the reason people choose Bonfield (natural setting valued by 72%).
- **A loyal, rooted, expansion-minded business base:** 20 of 23 BR+E businesses locally owned; half plan to expand; none plan to close.
- **Location:** Trans-Canada Highway frontage and rail through the township, 30 km from North Bay's services and workforce - the top-rated business factors (2.95 and 2.93 of 4).
- **Affordability:** relative to provincial markets a proven residential draw, though compressing.
- **Value-added manufacturing precedent:** the hardwood veneer plant operating in neighbouring Calvin Township, near Rutherglen.
- **Signature community events:** led by a Halloween parade drawing 2,000-3,000 visitors.
- **Municipal capacity:** staff are described as more capable, organized and grant-ready than in memory - with a capital asset management plan now in place.
- **Indigenous and francophone communities:** a significant Indigenous population (~13.6%) and proximity to neighbouring First Nations - a partnership strength; and a bilingual francophone workforce with a documented labour-market premium.

2.2 Weaknesses

- **No everyday services:** no gas station, no grocery, restaurants with limited hours, no lodging, no taxi - the most-wanted businesses in every evidence line (gas 71%, grocery 70% of survey respondents).
- **Limited commercial space or serviced land to lease:** the BR+E's lowest-rated factor (1.50/4).
- **Structural leakage:** 78% of employed residents commute to North Bay; 85% of respondents spend mostly or almost entirely outside Bonfield.
- **Connectivity failing half the community:** 55% say internet or cellular limits work, business or study from home; the fibre build-out has stalled.
- **Housing and demographics:** a rental housing deficit (11.2% of stock vs ~31% provincially) that binds workforce attraction, and an aging population (41.2% aged 55+) thinning the future labour force and volunteer base.

- **Roads:** rated near the bottom by residents (2.10/5) - the community's daily measure of municipal performance.
- **Process and communication:** approvals friction, planning and building application fees, and thin business communication (BR+E; sessions).
- **Internal cohesion:** the long-standing Bonfield-Rutherglen divide, a corrosive social-media culture, and a reputation/stigma participants say discounts property values.
- **Fiscal capacity:** a small, assessment-frozen tax base and a median household income roughly 15% below the provincial benchmark.

2.3 Opportunities

- **Remote work and amenity migration:** already real (17% fully remote), enabled by affordability and setting - the lowest-cost growth lever available, contingent on connectivity.
- **Agri-food and the co-operative model:** third-ranked survey priority and second-highest investment allocation; an active producer community; co-operative structures (purchasing, freight, labour, retail, forestry) raised independently across sessions, with the Verner co-op as a working regional model.
- **Value-added wood and small-scale manufacturing:** private woodlots across the region, a workforce that knows the industry, rail access, federal housing-supply programs - and two independent expert endorsements.
- **Housing programs with money attached:** the ~$50,000 additional dwelling unit subsidy (no income test), DNSSAB partnerships, community improvement plan incentives under the new Official Plan.
- **Four-season, resident-first tourism:** trail economy pass-through demand, EV-charging dwell time, the gateway waterfall, Rutherglen park as a rest-stop destination, and a signature festival to build out.
- **Regional and Indigenous partnership:** redesigned around the documented failure modes of the past - plus formal partnership with the Algonquins of Ontario, and with provincial and federal funding programs (NOHFC, FedNor, SCAP, ROD).
- **Documented supply gaps:** building materials, fuel, wholesale food and farm inputs, which double as an attraction and supplier-development shortlist.

2.4 Threats

- **Highway 17 uncertainty:** four-laning could bypass the township's highway-dependent activity or, planned well, become an opportunity - decades of silence have frozen land and investment decisions either way.
- **Delivery failure:** the community's skepticism that plans become action is documented; an unimplemented strategy would deepen it. Election turnover and thin municipal capacity are the specific mechanisms - both addressed in Chapter 12.
- **Climate events:** repeated microbursts and storm damage straining roads and budgets; lakes at provincial development capacity since the 1970s, with algae and beach-closure warnings already appearing.

- **Construction costs and grant competition: these stall anchor projects, and reinforce the case for a diversified, smaller-scale path rather than dependence on any single large project.**
- **Labour shortage:** binds precisely when businesses succeed.
- **Volunteer-base erosion:** collapse in the organizations that produce community life - events, halls, service clubs and seniors' housing.
- **Loss of the affordability advantage:** through price appreciation, absent the housing-diversity response in Pillar 4.

3. Vision, Principles and Trade-Offs

3.1 Vision 2031

Our vision

- *Bonfield in 2031 is a growing, welcoming rural township where more families put down roots each year; where the businesses we already have are visible, supported and expanding; where residents can buy fuel, food and a meal - and gather - without leaving home; and where the lakes, forests and farmland that make people choose Bonfield are protected by the same plan that grows us. One township, many communities, building an economy on our own terms.*

Every phrase is earned by the evidence: “growing” (the profile’s momentum and the survey’s 77% openness to growth); “the businesses we already have” (the town hall’s starred priority); “fuel, food and a meal - and gather” (the unanimous gap); “protected by the same plan” (lakes and affordability at the top of what residents insist on protecting); “one township, many communities” (the Rutherglen inclusion imperative); “on our own terms” (the community’s consistent rejection of big-footprint growth that does not fit).

3.2 Guiding principles

- **1. Facilitate, don’t operate.** The Township enables, convenes, brokers and advocates; the municipality takes the lead only for genuinely municipal assets and functions.
- **2. Support what exists first.** Retention and visibility before attraction. The cheapest economic development in Bonfield is making what is already here easier to find, easier to grow and harder to lose.
- **3. Start small, prove value, scale what works.** Quick wins first; feasibility before capital; pilots before programs. Sequencing is the answer to both fiscal limits and community skepticism.
- **4. Growth on Bonfield’s terms.** Modest, diverse residential growth and small-scale enterprise that fit the township’s water, land, labour and character. Lakes, affordability and rural character are constraints the Strategy designs within, not obstacles it designs around.
- **5. One township.** Bonfield, Rutherglen and the wider rural area should all benefit from the Strategy’s investments, communications and celebrations.
- **6. Partner deliberately.** With the Algonquins of Ontario and other Indigenous governments on a nation-to-nation basis; with neighbouring municipalities through structures designed around the documented failure modes of past regional bodies.
- **7. Leverage provincial and federal funding programs.** Ensure that grant writing is a systematic practice, and not an occasional application. This takes dedicated time and resources: grant writing is a distinct skill with its own calendar of intakes and reporting obligations, and the Strategy assumes named staff or contracted capacity to do it properly (F.10).

- **8. Be honest - about trade-offs, money and time.** The Strategy says what is realistic and what is not, names its dependencies, and reports progress annually through KPIs against published baselines.

3.3 The trade-offs this Strategy makes

The What We Heard report documented five genuine divergences in community opinion. A strategy must choose; these are the choices, and the reasoning:

- **Bedroom community: embrace and exceed.** The Strategy accepts the bedroom-community foundation - and invests in being excellent at it (Pillar 4) - while pursuing the local-economy layers (Pillars 2, 3, 5) that a pure dormitory strategy would forgo. Farm stands and home businesses are counted, supported and celebrated as part of the economy.
- **Highway 17: advocate for answers, prepare for both futures.** The Strategy takes no position on four-laning. It demands information (P1.8), protects the existing corridor economy, and ensures any interchange future finds Bonfield with planned employment land rather than frozen land.
- **Rental housing: yes - market and seniors' rentals first.** The documented shortfall is real and binding. The Strategy pursues market rentals, seniors' options and small units through partnerships.
- **Municipal space: broker first, build last.** The Township's first move on commercial space is planning, matchmaking and incentives for private and co-operative investment; municipally provided space is considered only where the market demonstrably will not act and a feasibility case exists.
- **Large capital projects: feasibility before commitment.** The community hub / medical centre concept advances as staged feasibility work with partner models (P3.5) - not as a construction commitment the current tax base cannot carry.

4. The Strategic Framework

The Strategy is organized as five pillars standing on one foundation. The logic runs bottom-up: the foundation (how the Township governs and partners) makes the pillars deliverable; Pillar 1 creates the conditions; Pillars 2-4 build the near-term economy - existing businesses, everyday anchors, homes; Pillar 5 grows the longer-horizon sector bets. Actions are numbered (P1.1, F.3, ...) and carried through Year One planning (Ch. 11), implementation (Ch. 12) and measurement (Ch. 13).

Figure 1. The strategic framework: five pillars supporting the 2031 vision, standing on the Govern for Trust foundation.

Element	Objective	Evidence anchor (WWH)
Pillar 1 - Foundations First	Enabling infrastructure and investment readiness: connectivity, roads, approvals, commercial space, energy, corridor answers	Themes 4, 5, 8 (Ch. 6.1); BR+E bottleneck (Ch. 3)
Pillar 2 - Support What We Have	Every existing business visible, connected, and supported to grow in place	Theme 3; BR+E support asks; town hall consensus
Pillar 3 - Everyday Anchors	Fuel, food, market and gathering places restored through private and co-operative investment, Township-facilitated	Theme 1; survey most-wanted; all sessions
Pillar 4 - Homes That Work	A diverse housing supply that grows the tax base and unlocks the workforce	Themes 2, 7; profile rental deficit; housing study
Pillar 5 - Sector Bets	Agri-food systems and value-added wood built patiently; a visitor economy that benefits residents first	Themes 6; survey priorities; expert convergence
Foundation - Govern for Trust	Visible delivery, honest communication, one-township inclusion, Indigenous and regional partnership, measurement	Theme 8; divergence handling; partner advice

Reading the action tables. Every action in Chapters 5 to 10 is set out in a single row with four planning attributes. They are read as follows.

- **Timing** tells you when the work happens: Year 1 (Fall 2026 to Fall 2027), Short (Years 1 to 2), Medium (Years 2 to 3), Long (Years 3 to 5), or Ongoing. Where two bands are combined (for example Y1-Short, or Short / Ongoing), the work spans both: it begins in the earlier band and continues into the later one.
- **Township role** tells you what the Township is actually doing: Lead (a municipal action the Township carries out itself), Facilitate (convene or broker between others), Advocate (press another government or provider), Partner (joint delivery with a named organization), or Support (assist another organization that leads).
- **Partners** names the organizations whose programs, funding or decisions the action depends on. Much of this Strategy is delivered through partner programs rather than new municipal spending.
- **Indicative budget** gives the order of magnitude: Low (under roughly $10,000, largely staff time), Mod (roughly $10,000 to $50,000, typically grant-supported), or Sig (over roughly $50,000, grant- and partner-dependent).

These are planning signals, not budget commitments. Every action in this Strategy remains subject to annual budgeting and, where marked, to senior-government funding being secured.

5. Pillar 1 - Foundations First: Infrastructure & Investment Readiness

Why this pillar. Bonfield's fundamentals rate better than its enabling conditions. Businesses prize the location and the community but hit the same wall - nowhere to lease, nowhere serviced to build, approvals rated no better than fair, connectivity failing half the community, and a highway future no one will clarify. The survey made better internet and infrastructure the community's top-rated priority (3.97/5, most first-place votes, highest investment allocation); the BR+E put space, housing, fees and permits at the bottom of its ratings; and the sessions added the hard boundaries - no municipal water or sewer, lakes at capacity, limited electricity. This pillar does not promise what the Township cannot deliver alone; it commits the Township to relentless, documented advocacy and to fixing everything that is municipal.

5.1 Objectives

- Measurably improve broadband and cellular service township-wide, and end the information vacuum around the stalled fibre build.
- Make the path from investment intention to premises shorter, clearer and more predictable - and create Bonfield's first genuine answer on commercial space.
- Align the roads program with residents' priorities and climate resilience, and secure the senior-government funding that pays for it.
- Get authoritative answers on Highway 17 and position employment land for either future.

5.2 Actions

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
P1.1	**Broadband & cellular advocacy program** - make connectivity a standing Council agenda item; maintain the monthly carrier follow-up in writing; escalate through the MPP, FedNor/ISED programs and public reporting of service data; publish interim options (incl. satellite) for unserved residents; support any resident-side data collection that strengthens the case.	Y1 / Ongoing	Advocate	Bell, ISED/FedNor, MPP, Blue Sky Net	Low
P1.2	**Approvals modernization** - publish plain-language permit guides, checklists and target timelines; institute pre-consultation meetings for commercial and multi-unit applications; review fees against neighbouring municipalities and report options to Council.	Short	Lead	JL Richards (OP review), neighbouring CBOs	Low-Mod
P1.3	**Commercial land and space answer** - through the Official Plan and zoning by-law update, designate and pre-plan small-scale	Short-Medium	Lead	Planning consultant, landowners	Mod

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
	commercial / light-industrial pockets (the Hamlets of Bonfield and Rutherglen); complete hamlet-level studies; build and maintain an inventory of available land and buildings, matched to the BR+E's documented demand.				
P1.4	**Investor-property matchmaking** - maintain the gap evidence from this Strategy as an investment prospectus (with the Community Profile); actively connect inquiries to willing owners of under-used commercial property.	Y1 / Ongoing	Facilitate	Property owners, NECO, Business Centre	Low
P1.5	**Roads program alignment & resilience** - publish the multi-year roads capital plan in plain language; frame culvert upsizing and drainage works as climate adaptation; pursue OCIF/CCBF and disaster-mitigation funding; report annually on kilometres treated.	Ongoing	Lead	OCIF/CCBF, NBMCA, contractors	Sig*
P1.6	**Natural gas demand aggregation** - survey resident and business willingness to connect; publish heating cost comparisons.	Medium	Facilitate	Enbridge, residents	Low
P1.7	**Electricity capacity** - document current constraints with Hydro One for the designated employment pockets, so power is a known quantity for any industrial inquiry; and scope the potential contribution of renewable energy infrastructure - solar, biomass and behind-the-meter generation - to local capacity, resilience and operating costs.	Medium	Advocate	Hydro One	Low
P1.8	**Highway 17 answers** - table a formal Township request to MTO for corridor timelines and alignment status; seek MTO participation in the Official Plan process; plan employment land for both a bypass and an interchange future; pursue paved-shoulder and crossing-safety improvements.	Y1 / Ongoing	Advocate	MTO, MPP, neighbouring municipalities	Low
P1.9	**EV charging enablement** - identify and pre-clear candidate sites (municipal and private); monitor and broker funding windows so the next program intake is not missed.	Short	Facilitate	Site owners, NRCan programs	Low
P1.10	**Shore road allowance policy** - bring a deliberate retain-or-sell policy to Council with public input, so decisions are strategic rather than case-by-case.	Medium	Lead	NBMCA, public	Low

** Significant cost, grant-dependent - proceeds only as senior-government funding is secured.*

6. Pillar 2 - Support What We Have: Business Retention, Visibility & Growth

Why this pillar. This is the community's most explicit instruction - the town hall's starred priority, the survey's most broadly ranked direction, and the BR+E's central message. Bonfield's businesses are loyal, rooted and growth-minded, and what they asked for is inexpensive: visibility, connection, information and follow-through. The BR+E's most-selected supports were the continuation of the BR+E itself, a Township-maintained directory, and e-marketing workshops; and at the town hall participants ran web searches on the spot that returned almost no listings for Bonfield businesses - including the pharmacy and local medical services. Almost everything in this pillar can begin in Year One, and much of it costs staff time.

6.1 Objectives

- Every operating business in Bonfield findable - online, on the road, and in Township communications - within eighteen months.
- A standing rhythm of connection: networking, service days, and an annual business check-in that keeps retention intelligence current.
- Every documented assistance request routed to the right program or partner, and the brokering gap between businesses and the regional support ecosystem closed.

6.2 Actions

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
P2.1	**Business inventory & definition** - settle the business count with a defensible inventory (registered employers, home-based, farm-gate and informal), building from the BR+E list - the baseline for the directory and for all measurement.	Y1	Lead	BR+E team, NECO	Low
P2.2	**Township business directory & online presence** - launch and maintain the online directory (two clicks from the homepage); claim and correct Google listings for the township and willing businesses; refresh continuously.	Y1 / Ongoing	Lead	Businesses, students/interns	Low
P2.3	**Business signage program** - township entrance and directional signage for business clusters, modelled on neighbouring townships' programs; opt-in for businesses that prefer visibility.	Short	Lead	MTO (permits), businesses	Mod
P2.4	**Quarterly networking events** - champion-led business mixers with the Township as secretariat - chamber-style, on the North Bay	Y1 / Ongoing	Facilitate	Business champions, Chamber, NECO	Low

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
	builders' association model. A fixed evening each quarter, rotating between Bonfield and Rutherglen venues; roughly ninety minutes; a short guest slot (a funder, a regulator or a peer business), open floor for introductions, and no membership fee. First event within six months of adoption.				
P2.5	**Service days & workshops in Bonfield** - standing schedule of Business Centre one-on-ones, employment-services drop-ins (commuter-friendly hours) and the e-marketing/social media workshops businesses requested.	Y1 / Ongoing	Facilitate	Business Centre, YES, LMG, Canadore	Low
P2.6	**Funding navigation & referral function** - a plain-language grants bulletin; route the BR+E's recorded assistance requests; track program windows (NOHFC, FedNor, NECO, SCAP) so Bonfield businesses stop missing intakes.	Y1 / Ongoing	Facilitate	NECO, FedNor, NOHFC, ministries	Low
P2.7	**Co-op, internship & apprenticeship brokering** - connect the eleven businesses that asked for program information; maintain a standing referral relationship with the colleges and Indigenous trades programs.	Y1	Facilitate	Canadore, Nipissing U, employers	Low
P2.8	**Continue the BR+E** - annual business check-in visits by the leadership team; repeat the full BR+E survey in 2028 and 2031 as the Strategy's business-climate measurement instrument.	Ongoing	Partner	BR+E Leadership Team, ministries	Low-Mod
P2.9	**Welcome & buy-local program** - new-resident welcome package carrying local business offers; a sustained buy-local campaign tied to the directory; free or low-cost vendor space at Township events.	Short	Lead	Businesses, community groups	Low
P2.10	**Mentorship & succession** - match willing retired entrepreneurs with new operators; deliver succession-planning outreach through trusted personal channels (BR+E team, NECO) to the township's long-tenured businesses.	Medium	Facilitate	NECO, Business Centre	Low
P2.11	**Local procurement review** - review Township purchasing practices for opportunities to source locally within procurement law, and publish the result.	Medium	Lead	-	Low

7. Pillar 3 - Everyday Anchors: Services & Gathering Places

Why this pillar. Fuel, food and a place to gather were named in every engagement session without exception, wanted by seven in ten survey respondents, and identified by businesses as both a daily cost and a market opportunity. The community was equally clear about the how: realistic formats, private and co-operative investment, and a Township that clears the path rather than running the pumps. This pillar stages the anchors from most to least mature: fuel (two live paths), the market (a resolution already passed), food and gathering (enablement and incentives), and the community hub (feasibility first).

7.1 Objectives

- Fuel service available in the township within the Strategy period, through at least one of the two documented paths.
- A consistent, well-known weekly seasonal market operating by summer 2027.
- At least one new food-service or gathering-place investment enabled through incentives, siting support and matchmaking.
- A community hub / medical centre decision made on evidence: feasibility, partner models and funding - before capital.

7.2 Actions

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
P3.1	**Fuel service restoration** - support the Rutherglen store's fuel rebuild through responsive approvals and advocacy where needed; complete diligence on the card-lock suggestion - an unstaffed, card- or fob-activated fuel outlet of the kind used by fleets, farms and contractors, requiring no attendant, storefront or fixed hours. Diligence covers operator contact, siting and revenue model, and bring a go/no-go recommendation to Council in a timely manner; and explore options for the co-location of EV charging stations at whichever site proceeds.	Y1-Short	Facilitate / Lead (site)	Store owner, card-lock operator, TSSA	Low (diligence)
P3.2	**The Bonfield market** - publicize the standing free Saturday-vending resolution immediately; establish a fixed time and place; add power hookups for freezer vendors as funding	Y1	Lead → Facilitate	Vendors, Agricultural Society	Low-Mod

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
	allows; grow toward shoulder-season operation.				
P3.3	**Food & gathering-place enablement - shortlist and pre-clear candidate sites;** apply CIP incentives to food-service and gathering-place investment; actively market the documented demand (restaurant 47% of survey respondents) to prospective operators.	Short-Medium	Facilitate	Property owners, operators, NOHFC	Mod (incentives)
P3.4	**Grocery alternatives** - approach the regional co-operative about a Bonfield delivery-route depot; explore satellite, consignment farm-store and low-overhead small-format grocery models with existing operators, rather than recruiting a full-scale standalone grocer.	Short-Medium	Facilitate	Coop Régionale, local producers/retailers	Low
P3.5	**Community hub / medical centre feasibility** - staged study of need, siting, partner models (including the neighbouring township's privately financed lease-back precedent) and funding (NOHFC); explicitly scoped to include auxiliary community and small-commercial space; proceed to design only on a positive feasibility result and identified funding.	Medium	Lead	Health partners, NOHFC, developers	Mod (study)
P3.6	**Community space affordability** - work with the hall's volunteer committee and owner on the severance/agreement path; review municipal facility rental and insurance barriers; publish a one-page guide to bookable community spaces.	Short	Support	Hall committee, diocese, insurers	Low
P3.7	**Local mobility pilot** - test demand for a volunteer- or retiree-run community ride service (seniors, events, evening economy); connect to existing accessible-transit programs.	Medium	Facilitate	Community groups, DNSSAB	Low-Mod
P3.8	**Childcare advocacy** - document local demand and advocate with DNSSAB and providers for licensed home-based and centre capacity - a named barrier for working families and employers.	Medium	Advocate	DNSSAB, providers	Low

8. Pillar 4 - Homes That Work: Housing Diversity & Resident Attraction

Why this pillar. Modest residential growth is the engine every evidence line endorsed: more households sharing the tax burden, sustaining services, and gradually making local commerce viable. But the mix matters as much as the count. The district housing study identifies a one- and two-bedroom shortfall; rental housing is 11.2% of stock against roughly 31% provincially; BR+E employers name housing as a hiring barrier; and seniors want to age in the community that raised them. The community also set conditions - design diversity, protected character, protected affordability - and this pillar carries them.

8.1 Objectives

- Sustain residential growth at or above the district-leading pace, with visibly greater diversity of form, size and tenure.
- Measurable progress on the rental and small-unit shortfall, including seniors' options, by mid-term.
- Resident attraction by enablement: connectivity, services and housing that let the migration already underway continue - supported by honest, quality-of-life storytelling rather than expensive campaigns.

8.2 Actions

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
P4.1	**Community improvement plan (CIP)** - adopt a CIP under the new Official Plan with incentives targeted to the housing the evidence supports: rentals, small units, seniors' options, mixed-use - and to design diversity in new subdivisions.	Short	Lead	Planning consultant, MMAH	Mod
P4.2	**ADU acceleration** - actively promote the ~$50,000 additional dwelling unit subsidy (no income test); publish a plain-language ADU guide; celebrate each completion publicly; target measurable uptake by mid-term.	Y1 / Ongoing	Lead	DNSSAB, homeowners	Low
P4.3	**Builder attraction & diversity** - market Bonfield's demand evidence to additional builders; use pre-consultation and the CIP to encourage varied designs and formats (including small homes and land-condominium models); carry the community's design-diversity input into the zoning by-law update.	Short-Medium	Facilitate	Builders, realtors	Low

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
P4.4	**Rental & seniors' housing partnerships** - pursue purpose-built rental and seniors' projects with DNSSAB, non-profit housing partners and private proponents, using the lease-back and partnership models documented in the region; support the community's non-profit seniors' housing organization (charitable status, grants, succession) including its ambition for units on the Rutherglen side.	Medium-Long	Partner	DNSSAB, non-profits, CMHC programs	Mod (Township share)
P4.5	**Workforce housing dialogue** - convene employers, builders and agencies on employer-supported rental and rent-to-own models for recruited workers - an idea a local builder has already tested.	Medium	Facilitate	Employers, builders, DNSSAB	Low
P4.6	**Resident attraction, honestly told** - a modest, always-on program: the welcome package (P2.9), a "life in Bonfield" presence on Township channels, realtor information kits - anchored in what residents actually value (nature, quiet, community, affordability) and in what is genuinely improving.	Short / Ongoing	Lead	Realtors, community contributors	Low

9. Pillar 5 - Sector Bets: Agri-Food, Value-Added Wood, and a Visitor Economy on Community Terms

Why this pillar. Two sectors earned their place through independent convergence. Agri-food ranks third on survey priority and second on investment allocation, dominates the BR+E's sector energy, and generated the engagement's richest idea set - with the co-operative as the recurring organizational answer to small scale. Value-added wood was endorsed, unprompted, by two independent expert voices, and rests on real assets: private woodlots, a knowledgeable workforce, rail, the operating veneer plant, and national housing-supply demand. Tourism completes the pillar on the community's explicit condition - 54% support it "if it benefits residents too" - so every visitor-economy action here serves residents first. These are patient bets: Year One is organizing and scoping; capital follows evidence.

9.1 Objectives

- At least one producer co-operative structure (purchasing, freight, labour or marketing) operating by mid-term, township-facilitated then member-led.
- A consistent market and measurably stronger local food connections between producers and local buyers.
- A completed value-added wood opportunity assessment and at least one resulting initiative (co-operative, education program or investment lead) by Year Three.
- A visitor economy that residents can point to as serving them: trail services, the market, events, park and gateway improvements.

9.2 Agri-food actions

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
P5.1	**Co-op formation series** - convene producers and food businesses; invite the Verner co-operative to present its model; commission light feasibility on the priority structures (purchasing/feed, freight, rotating student labour, consignment retail); facilitate formation for up to two years, then step back to membership.	Y1-Medium	Facilitate	Producers, Coop Régionale, OMAFA	Low-Mod
P5.2	**Producer business education** - wholesale-versus-retail pricing, food regulations, and market-readiness workshops - the documented gap between local supply and local demand.	Short	Facilitate	Business Centre, OMAFA, mentors	Low
P5.3	**Processing gap analysis** - a realistic regional assessment of abattoir/butchery and shared-kitchen capacity - demand, regulatory load, capital - before any investment conversation;	Medium	Facilitate	Regional partners, producers, OMAFA	Mod

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
	pursue partner and funding interest only on its findings.				
P5.4	**Agri-environmental funding uptake** - promote SCAP and related cost-share programs to local farms before the current window closes (~2028); connect the Rainville Road farm cluster's investment plans to programs and to any road-upgrade planning.	Y1-Short	Facilitate	OMAFA, NBMCA, farms	Low
P5.5	**Farm futures** - host succession and lease-to-buy information for aspiring and retiring farmers; explore partnership with the Algonquins of Ontario on food production, marketing and supply chains.	Medium	Facilitate	AOO, OMAFA, farm organizations	Low

9.3 Value-added wood actions

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
P5.6	**Wood sector scoping study** - the key informant's prescription, executed: engage the national and provincial forestry associations; scan Northern Ontario mills for value-added gaps; meet regional forest-licence holders; assess the small-scale modular/component manufacturing opportunity (including rail shipment and federal housing-supply programs); report options to Council by Year Three.	Short-Medium	Lead	Forestry associations, licence holders, FedNor/NOHFC	Mod
P5.7	**Private woodlot stewardship** - partner with the Ontario Woodlot Association on landowner education (managed harvest versus cut-and-run); explore a woodlot co-operative with interested owners; use municipal properties as demonstration sites.	Medium	Facilitate	OWA, landowners, MNR	Low
P5.8	**Forestry-adjacent enterprise** - support education and small-enterprise development in non-timber forest products and firewood as entry-level activity, linking to regional initiatives already underway.	Long	Support	Regional ED initiatives, producers	Low

9.4 Visitor economy actions (residents first)

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
P5.9	**Trail economy services** - work with the snowmobile club and operators so trail traffic finds fuel, food and warm-up locally (links P3.1-P3.3); support club infrastructure grant	Ongoing	Support	Bonfield & Area Snowmobile Club, Discovery	Low

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
	applications; maintain strong club-Township relations.			Routes Trails Organization	
P5.10	**Gateway & park investments** - pursue grant funding for the gateway boardwalk/viewing platform at Kaibuskong Park, and the revitalization of Rutherglen Park (local recreation + highway rest-stop + EV-dwell destination); proceed as funding is secured.	Medium-Long	Lead	NOHFC, provincial programs, NBMCA	Sig*
P5.11	**Signature events** - build the Halloween parade toward a full-day signature festival; consolidate the events calendar; promote consistently through one channel.	Short / Ongoing	Facilitate	Rec committee, community groups	Low-Mod
P5.12	**Modest accommodation enablement** - respond to and matchmake small accommodation concepts (small motel, cabins, dark-sky/yurt formats) through siting support and incentives; maintain the STR licensing regime's balance of hosting and accountability.	Medium	Facilitate	Proponents, operators	Low
P5.13	**Lake stewardship as economic policy** - hold the line on lake development capacity; support septic standards, monitoring and boater education - the precondition for every waterfront value this Strategy touches.	Ongoing	Lead / Partner	NBMCA, lake associations, MECP	Low
P5.14	**Volunteer organizer support** - practical backing for the volunteers who produce Bonfield's events: a single named Township contact, help with permits, insurance and road closures, equipment and storage support, and recruitment through the volunteer succession program (F.8).	Short / Ongoing	Support	Rec committee, service clubs, event organizers	Low

** Significant cost, grant-dependent - proceeds only as senior-government funding is secured.*

10. The Foundation - Govern for Trust

Why this foundation. The evidence was blunt: residents doubt that plans become action; businesses rated the Township's economic development function 1.92 of 4 - a mandate and a baseline; a vocal negativity culture deters investment and volunteers; Rutherglen feels left out; and the region's last co-operative venture failed on governance, not on ideas. Everything in Pillars 1-5 will be judged through this lens. The foundation is not a communications plan bolted on at the end; it is the operating system the Strategy runs on.

10.1 Actions

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
F.1	**Quick-wins program & public tracker** - deliver the Year One list (Ch. 11); publish a simple public tracker of every Strategy action's status, updated quarterly - including items not progressing, and why.	Y1 / Ongoing	Lead	-	Low
F.2	**Annual report & refresh** - an annual plain-language progress report to Council and community against Chapter 13's indicators; a mid-term Strategy refresh in 2028-29 using the repeated BR+E and community survey.	Ongoing	Lead	-	Low
F.3	**Community economic development committee** - establish a standing committee open to any resident with energy and ideas - not only business owners - with clear terms of reference, rotating membership, and a direct line to Council; the committee co-owns the quick-wins tracker.	Y1	Lead	Residents, Council	Low
F.4	**Continue to communicate, communicate, communicate** - a plain-language communications rhythm: get ahead of every Strategy milestone; explain what taxes fund and what is municipal versus provincial; celebrate business, housing and volunteer successes by default.	Ongoing	Lead	-	Low
F.5	**One-township inclusion** - deliberate balance of investment, programming and presence across Bonfield, Rutherglen, and the wider rural area - backed by robust stakeholder & community engagement.	Ongoing	Lead	Community groups	Low
F.6	**Indigenous partnership** - pursue a consultation and partnership protocol with the Algonquins of Ontario; explore joint economic opportunities (food systems, forestry, tourism, procurement); reflect the township's	Short / Ongoing	Partner	Algonquins of Ontario, Nipissing First Nation, MNO	Low

#	Action	Timing	Role	Partners	Cost
	significant Indigenous population in programming and celebration.				
F.7	**Regional co-operation, redesigned** - recover the predecessor regional body's research and interview its principals; adopt design principles before joining or forming anything - non-elected professional management, open governance, project-specific mandates, measurable member value; start with concrete joint projects (corridor advocacy, co-op infrastructure, tourism) rather than a standing bureaucracy.	Short-Medium	Partner	Neighbouring municipalities, ministries	Low-Mod
F.8	**Volunteer succession** - volunteer fairs with prepared role descriptions; recognition for legacy groups; municipal contingency planning for functions that currently depend on aging volunteer organizations.	Short / Ongoing	Facilitate	Service clubs, community groups	Low
F.9	**Community pride & property standards** - a positive-first program: cleanup events, a creative standards approach, gateway beautification tied to P5.10, and consistent celebration of what is improving - measured against the reputation discount participants described.	Medium	Facilitate	Residents, community groups	Low-Mod
F.10	**Council & staff continuity** - economic development orientation for every incoming Council (starting immediately after the Fall 2026 election); documented handover of this Strategy and its evidence base; sustained pursuit of intern and capacity funding (NOHFC, FedNor CIINO and related programs) for the economic development function.	Y1 / each term	Lead	Ministries, AMO/FONOM training	Low
F.11	**Francophone heritage & identity** - recognize and program for the Township's francophone community and the documented labour-market premium bilingualism carries (310 regional job postings). Bilingual Township communications where practical; partnership with Les Compagnons des francs loisirs (known locally as Les Compagnons), the French language and cultural centre based in North Bay that delivers programming across the region; and francophone content in events, tourism promotion and business support.	Short / Ongoing	Partner	Les Compagnons, ACFO, francophone businesses	Low

11. Year One: Prove It

The Strategy's first year is designed to answer the community's most documented doubt - that plans sit on shelves - with the cheapest credible evidence: delivery. Every Year One item below has documented demand behind it, a named action in Chapters 5-10, and an indicative budget of Low unless noted. Together they are deliverable within existing capacity plus the intern and program funding already identified.

Quarter	Commitment	Action ref.	Cost
Q1 (Fall 2026)	Adopt the Strategy; establish the community economic development committee; publish the quick-wins tracker; deliver post-election Council ED orientation	F.1, F.3, F.10	Low
Q1	Publicize the Saturday free-vending resolution; set the market's fixed time and place for the 2027 season	P3.2	Low
Q1	Route every recorded BR+E assistance request to the right partner; add willing businesses to the newsletter list	P2.6	Low
Q2 (Winter 2027)	Launch the business inventory and directory build; claim and continue to build and improve upon the township's online presence	P2.1, P2.2	Low
Q2	First quarterly networking event (champion-led); confirm the standing Business Centre / employment service-day schedule	P2.4, P2.5	Low
Q2	Table the formal MTO request on Highway 17; adopt the broadband advocacy program as a standing Council item	P1.8, P1.1	Low
Q3 (Spring 2027)	Complete card-lock diligence and bring the go/no-go recommendation to Council; continue support for the Rutherglen fuel rebuild	P3.1	Low
Q3	Launch the ADU promotion campaign and plain-language guide; first completions celebrated publicly	P4.2	Low
Q3	Open the market's first full season; connect SCAP cost-share programs to local farms	P3.2, P5.4	Low-Mod
Q4 (Summer 2027)	Convene the first co-op formation session with the Verner co-operative presenting	P5.1	Low
Q4	Publish approvals guides and permit checklists; launch the welcome package with local business offers	P1.2, P2.9	Low
Q4	First annual progress report to Council and community against the Chapter 13 baselines	F.2	Low

12. Implementation: Capacity, Funding and Risk

12.1 Who does what

Council owns the Strategy: it adopts the plan, receives the annual report, and holds the budget levers. The CAO/Clerk-Treasurer is the accountable officer, supported by designated staff - an economic development and/or planning officer as the day-to-day lead - together with the intern and capacity-based funding the Township has already begun to secure. The community economic development committee (F.3) is the standing community partner and the quick-wins tracker's co-owner. The BR+E Leadership Team continues as the business-retention vehicle. Regional and provincial partners - NECO Community Futures, the Business Centre, the Labour Market Group, the ministries, NBMCA, DNSSAB and the colleges - are named against every action in Chapters 5-10; their programs, not new municipal spending, carry much of this Strategy.

Capacity is the honest constraint. The action tables deliberately weight Year One toward staff-time actions, stage everything costlier behind feasibility and funding, and lean on partner delivery. If capacity funding lapses, the annual report names what slowed as a result - the Strategy does not pretend capacity it does not have.

12.2 Funding the Strategy

Source	What it can fund here	Relevant actions
NOHFC (Northern Ontario Heritage Fund)	Community capacity, interns, feasibility studies, community infrastructure, event development	P3.5, P5.6, P5.10, F.10
FedNor / ISED	Broadband advocacy support, business and sector development, feasibility; economic development officer capacity through the Community Investment Initiative for Northern Ontario (CIINO) - up to 90% of salary and benefits, to a maximum of $100,000 a year for up to three years, for rural municipalities without a dedicated officer, on multi-year applications. Budget is currently limited; early contact with a FedNor officer is advised	P1.1, P5.6, P2.5-P2.7, F.10
Rural Ontario Development (ROD) program	Strategy implementation, core-area and gateway revitalization, marketing	P2.3, P4.6, P5.11, F.9
OCIF / CCBF (infrastructure funds)	Roads capital, culverts, climate-resilient works	P1.5
SCAP & OMAFA programs	On-farm cost-share, drainage, agri-food development (window to ~2028)	P5.1-P5.5
DNSSAB / housing programs / CMHC	ADU subsidy, rental and seniors' housing partnerships	P4.2, P4.4
NRCan / utility programs	EV charging infrastructure	P1.9, P3.1
NECO / Business Centre / LMG	Business advisory, loans, workforce programming - delivered, not just referred	P2.5-P2.7

Program names and windows change; the funding-navigation function (P2.6) tracks intakes for the Township itself as much as for businesses. Grant dependence is stated on every Significant-cost action.

12.3 Risks and mitigations

Risk	Signal	Mitigation
Capacity shortfall - the plan exceeds the team	Quick-wins tracker slips two consecutive quarters	Year One weighted to staff-time actions; partner delivery; capacity funding pursuit (F.10); annual report names the constraint honestly
Election turnover - the Strategy loses its champions	New Council, new priorities	Evidence-based mandate documented in WWH; Council orientation each term (F.10); committee and BR+E team as continuity carriers; early visible wins

Risk	Signal	Mitigation
Skepticism hardens - “another shelf document”	Low engagement with Year One actions	Deliver Q1 items within 90 days; public tracker including misses; close every promised loop
Anchor projects stall - fuel, hub, market falter	Diligence negative or funding absent	Two independent fuel paths; staged feasibility before capital; market designed to run at near-zero cost
Regional co-operation repeats history	Governance disputes, unclear value	Design principles before membership (F.7); project-specific starts; documented lessons applied
Climate events divert budgets	Storm damage claims recur	Resilience framing built into roads program (P1.5); disaster-mitigation funding pursuit
Volunteer base erodes faster than succession	Legacy groups fold	F.8 succession program; municipal contingency planning for critical functions
Key dependency fails (carrier, MTO, funding programs)	No response to advocacy	Documented, escalating advocacy with MPP and public reporting; alternatives published (e.g., satellite internet)

13. Measuring Success

The community asked to be shown, not told. This chapter sets fourteen indicators with documented baselines from the 2025-26 evidence base. They are reported annually (F.2), and the two survey instruments - the BR+E and the community survey - are repeated in 2028 (mid-term refresh) and 2031 (Strategy renewal) so the perception measures are refreshed on schedule. Targets are directional commitments, honest about what the Township controls: it can guarantee the directory exists; it cannot guarantee a private investor builds - but it can measure whether the conditions and the pipeline improved.

Indicator	Baseline (2025-26)	2031 direction / target
Population (Census)	2,146 (2021)	Sustained growth at or above district pace (2031 Census)
Business climate impression (BR+E: good/excellent)	11 of 24	Majority of respondents (2028 and 2031 BR+E)
Satisfaction with municipal economic development (BR+E, 1-4)	1.92	≥ 2.5 by 2028; ≥ 2.75 by 2031
Commercial space availability (BR+E rating, 1-4)	1.50	≥ 2.25; at least one new leasable commercial premises created
Businesses listed in Township directory	0 (directory does not exist)	Comprehensive listing per the P2.1 inventory; refreshed annually
Fuel service in the township	None	Restored - at least one outlet operating
Weekly seasonal market	No consistent market	Operating every season from 2027
Households limited by connectivity (survey)	55%	Under 25% (2031 survey)
Survey rating: local shopping & services (1-5)	1.65	≥ 2.5
Survey rating: roads & infrastructure (1-5)	2.10	≥ 3.0
Residential completions	12-20 units/yr (district target band)	Sustained ≥ 15/yr with growing small-unit & rental share
ADU subsidy uptake	Minimal	10+ completed units by 2031
Business networking events	None	Quarterly, business-led, sustained
Spending mostly/entirely outside Bonfield (survey)	85%	Under 75% (2031 survey)

Perception indicators depend on repeating the survey instruments; the cost of both repeats is provided for in P2.8 and F.2. Where an indicator misses, the annual report says so and says why - that is the point of publishing baselines.

14. Conclusion: The Ask

This Strategy asks three things. Of Council: adopt it, fund its modest Year One, receive its annual report, and hold every future budget conversation with its evidence on the table. Of Township staff and partners: deliver the quick wins fast, honestly track everything else, and let the community see the machinery working. Of the community: use what gets built - the market, the directory, the events, the businesses. Every line of evidence said the same thing about Bonfield’s history: services died here when they were not used, and thrived where the community showed up. “Use it or lose it” was the residents’ phrase, and it applies to the Strategy itself.

Bonfield does not need to become something else to succeed. The evidence is unambiguous that its future is a better version of what it already is: a growing rural township on beautiful water, close to a city, affordable to families, loyal to its own - with fuel at the corner, food on Saturday mornings, neighbours it can find online and in person, and a municipal partner that says what it will do and shows what it did. That township is five years of disciplined, visible, evidence-bound work away. This is the plan for it.

Appendix A - Mapping

Every pillar traces to the What We Heard report (WWH, v2.1, September 2026) and its underlying sources. This table is the Strategy's audit trail - and the community's assurance that its input, not preference, drove the plan.

Strategy element	WWH evidence	Underlying sources
Pillar 1 - Foundations First	Cross-cutting themes 4, 5 (space/servicing/process; connectivity); Ch. 5.8; divergence: Highway 17	BR+E ratings (space 1.50, permits 2.00); survey priority #1 (internet 3.97); session infrastructure themes; profile servicing constraints
Pillar 2 - Support What We Have	Theme 3 (support existing; visibility); Ch. 5.4; quick wins 6.4	Town hall starred priority; BR+E support asks (directory 13, networking, e-marketing 13); survey ranking (small business top 3 × 62/73)
Pillar 3 - Everyday Anchors	Theme 1 (fuel, food, gathering); Ch. 5.2	Survey most-wanted (gas 71%, grocery 70%); every session; BR+E anchors & supply gaps; card-lock and market proposals
Pillar 4 - Homes That Work	Themes 2, 7 (growth engine; housing/workforce); Ch. 5.3	Profile (+7.8%, rental 11.2%); housing study one- and two-bedroom shortfall; BR+E hiring barriers; survey growth attitudes (77% open, conditions)
Pillar 5 - Sector Bets	Theme 6 (agri-food & wood); Ch. 5.5, 5.6, 5.9	Survey (agri-food 3rd priority, 2nd allocation; tourism 54% conditional); BR+E sector energy; co-op convergence; two expert forestry endorsements
Foundation - Govern for Trust	Theme 8 (trust & delivery); Ch. 5.10, 5.11; divergences 6.2	Survey "listen to residents"; BR+E ED rating 1.92; session advice on quick wins, Rutherglen, regional lessons, Indigenous partnership

Abbreviations

ADU - additional dwelling unit; AOO - Algonquins of Ontario; BR+E - Business Retention + Expansion; CCBF - Canada Community-Building Fund; CIINO - Community Investment Initiative for Northern Ontario; CIP - community improvement plan; CMHC - Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation; DNSSAB - District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board; EDS - Economic Development Strategy; FedNor - Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario; LMG - The Labour Market Group; MECP - Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks; MMAH - Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; MTO - Ministry of Transportation; NBMCA - North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority; NECO - NECO Community Futures Development Corporation; NOHFC - Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation; OCIF - Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund; OMAFA - Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness; OWA - Ontario Woodlot Association; ROD - Rural Ontario Development program; SCAP - Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership; MNO - Métis Nation of Ontario; STR - short-term rental; TSSA - Technical Standards and Safety Authority; WWH - What We Heard report.

Appendix B - BR+E Working Group Priority Action Items and Action Plans

On June 24, 2026 the wider Business Retention + Expansion Working Group met in retreat to translate the BR+E survey findings into priority action items, and to complete detailed action planning templates for the short-term priorities. This appendix reproduces that work as the Working Group recorded it, including its own item numbering, and shows where each priority is carried forward in the Strategy.

B.1 Priority action items by goal area

The items below are the Working Group's own priorities from the retreat, in its own words. Each carries the number the Working Group used on the day and its timeline: ST short term, MT medium term, LT long term. Those numbers come from the standard BR+E action item list the Working Group worked from, and three of them were recorded against two different actions (1.6, 3.1 and 5.1). They are kept exactly as recorded so that this appendix remains a faithful record of the retreat. Every item is also named, and Section B.3 maps each one by name to the Strategy action that carries it forward, so nothing depends on the numbering.

Business climate

- **1.6 Development process audits** - flow chart, education and regulations (linked to 1.4). ST
- **1.9 Community transparency plan** - municipal open houses, forums and similar. MT
- **1.1 Concierge service** - one point of contact; develop the pathway. LT
- **1.6 Service baseline metrics** - revitalize the old directory; continuous BR+E (linked to 1.1). LT

Future plans

- **2.2 Co-branded outreach** - targeted outreach campaign with partners. ST
- **2.7 Permitting priority protocols** - an approval pipeline for projects linked to jobs. MT
- **2.8 Agri-food infrastructure toolkit** - a planning guide. MT
- **2.5 Strategic monitoring** - a programme to monitor business conditions and the effect of core-area improvements. LT
- **2.1 Grant and funding network** - targeted provincial and federal funding, linked to 2.10 funding forums. LT

Business development

- **3.11 Home-based business opportunity** - what is available, and what does it mean? ST
- **3.1 Bonfield networking event**. MT
- **3.1 Collaborative regional marketing** - marketing alliances along the corridor. LT
- **3.2 Leakage campaign** - filling known local gaps: hardware, fuel and grocery. LT

Workforce development

- **4.5 Localized training delivery** - coordinate hosting of required training courses. ST
- **4.3 Workforce transportation** - survey and assess commuting bottlenecks; shared transportation. MT
- **4.8 Youth services and childcare advocacy** - childcare options, exploratory. MT
- **4.9 Specialized profession outreach** - targeted recruitment campaign for in-demand professions. MT

Community development

- **5.1 Unified business directory** - launch and maintain a business directory. ST
- **5.1 Community-driven event expansion** - leverage existing community events. MT
- **5.3 Shovel-ready land program** - partner with private landowners and real estate. MT
- **5.7 Tourism infrastructure cross-promotion** - connect trails and assets to businesses in hospitality, retail and guiding. LT

B.2 Completed action planning templates

The Working Group completed five action planning templates at the retreat, one for each short-term priority. They are transcribed below, with timings expressed as durations rather than fixed calendar dates so that programming stays flexible.

Template 1 - Business climate: development process audit, flow chart, education and regulations (1.6)

Performance measures: hits on Facebook; downloads from the website; new businesses registered; flow charts given out in hard copy.

- Identify the regulations that all businesses may require in order to start - 1 to 2 months. The requirements already exist, so what is needed is the staff time to assemble them. Fire, Building, Planning and Public Works, with NBMCA, TSSA, engineering and the relevant ministries.
- Research sectors and the different business types needing different regulations - developer, manufacturer, retail and service, home-based, agriculture - 1 month. New economic development staff person; specific ministries as required.
- Set out the detail under each regulation according to sector - 3 months. Use links rather than reproducing detail.
- Produce the flow charts - 1 week. A designer may be required, at some cost. Economic development staff person.
- Promotion and education to the public and to businesses especially - 2 months. Facebook, library, newsletter and website; delivered internally.

Template 2 - Future plans: co-branded outreach (2.2)

Performance measures: number of inquiries; number of successful interactions; number of jobs created and maintained; number of successes; number of community partners.

- Create a list and database of all partners and what each of them does - 1 week. Municipal staff, with community agencies.
- Establish a mechanism to review and update that list - ongoing. Everyone; municipal staff and community agencies.
- Run an annual survey for business and update the programme - ongoing. Municipal staff; municipality.
- Create the foundational document that explains the services available - 1 month. Everyone; municipality.

Template 3 - Business development: home-based business opportunity and signage (3.11)

Performance measures: list of home-based businesses; number of signs sold; number of hits on the website directory.

- Call out to develop the inventory; an incentive will be needed - 1 month. Focus group on how home-based businesses operate, run as part of the Economic Development Strategy. Potential intern, with the Township and the consulting team.
- Signage: a combined virtual and physical initiative - 1 month. Have businesses sign up to a Growing Bonfield Together declaration. Business owners.
- Develop a decal for home-based businesses - 2 months. Launch with the Strategy; include a QR code linking to the business directory.
- Signage for participants - 2 months. Website capability; develop a standardized logo and pricing with a supplier; consult on business registration and sign appearance.
- Encourage participants to order signs to promote the initiative - ongoing over the following six months. Promote the initiative on the website.

Template 4 - Workforce training: localized training delivery (4.5)

Performance measures: number of workshops promoted and number of participants; number of partnerings with other municipalities; reduced cost where a speaker and speaker travel are shared.

- Where anyone has a training need, start with the online option - throughout the year. Many courses are online and never need to be in person (Smart Serve, for example); the municipality can simply promote the links, and providers offer numerous dates.
- Deliver in person where online will not do. Ask The Business Centre to organize; the municipality promotes. Sessions could be held in Bonfield or elsewhere in the region.
- Reach out to other municipalities when starting training, so the cost of a trainer can be shared across two sessions or two days. The Business Centre will ensure cost recovery if participants are charged, or may ask the municipality to help cover location and speaker costs. Note that even a $10 charge makes a participant more likely to attend; when training is free, people cancel without hesitation.
- Build on training already delivered for municipal staff - throughout the year. Invite public and business participants to be trained at the same time, with the public and business places offered at cost.

Template 5 - Community development: unified business directory (5.1)

Performance measures: number of businesses registered; number of direct referrals.

- Review the current list, including the tax roll - 1 month. Staff time, plus a financial contribution for the website. Municipal.
- Reach out to a comparable municipality for an example directory to work from.
- Soft launch with advertising, and check the listings for accuracy - timed to coincide with the wrap-up of the BR+E programme.
- Run a contest to encourage businesses to register.
- Have the website ready, update Google listings, and make the directory interactive for businesses.

B.3 How the retreat priorities are carried into this Strategy

- **Development process audits and permitting priority protocols** (1.6, 2.7) → P1.2 Approvals modernization.
- **Community transparency plan and strategic monitoring** (1.9, 2.5) → F.1 quick-wins tracker, F.4 communications, and Chapter 13.
- **Concierge service and co-branded outreach** (1.1, 2.2) → P1.4 investor and property matchmaking, P2.6 funding navigation and referral, F.7 regional co-operation.
- **Service baseline metrics and unified business directory** (1.6, 5.1) → P2.1 business inventory and definition, P2.2 directory and online presence, and the directory indicator in Chapter 13.
- **Agri-food infrastructure toolkit** (2.8) → P5.2 producer business education and P5.3 processing gap analysis.
- **Grant and funding network** (2.1) → P2.6, and Guiding Principle 7.
- **Home-based business opportunity and signage** (3.11) → P2.1, P2.2 and P2.3 business signage program.
- **Bonfield networking event (3.1)** → P2.4 quarterly networking events.
- **Collaborative regional marketing** (3.1) → F.7 and P5.11 signature events.
- **Leakage campaign** (3.2) → P2.9 welcome and buy-local program, P3.4 grocery alternatives, P1.4.
- **Localized training delivery** (4.5) → P2.5 service days and workshops in Bonfield.
- **Workforce transportation** (4.3) → P3.7 local mobility pilot.
- **Youth services and childcare advocacy** (4.8) → P3.8 childcare advocacy.
- **Specialized profession outreach** (4.9) → P4.5 workforce housing dialogue and P4.6 resident attraction.
- **Community-driven event expansion** (5.1) → P5.11 and P5.14 volunteer organizer support.
- **Shovel-ready land program** (5.3) → P1.3 commercial land and space answer.
- **Tourism infrastructure cross-promotion** (5.7) → P5.9 trail economy services.